

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

MEPA NEPA Checklist

MISSION. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, through its employees and citizen commission, provides for the stewardship of the fish, wildlife, parks and recreational resources of Montana, while contributing to the quality of life for present and future generations

All Montanans have the right to live in a clean and healthful environment. This environmental analysis is intended to provide an evaluation of the likely impacts to the human environment from proposed actions of the project cited below. This analysis will help Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to fulfill its oversight obligations and satisfy rules and regulations of both the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Please provide a discussion for each section. If no impacts are likely, be sure to discuss the reasoning that led to your determination.

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed action.

Development _____

Renovation _____

Maintenance X

Land Acquisition _____

Equipment Acquisition _____

Other (Describe) _____

2. If appropriate, agency responsible for the proposed action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

3. Name, address phone number and E-mail address of project sponsor.

Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club
P.O. Box 404
Eureka, MT 59917
(406) 889-5074
jdvoyles@interbel.net

4. Name of project: Trail Grooming of Previously Approved Trails on the Kootenai National Forest (KNF)

5. If applicable:

Estimated construction/commencement date N/A

Estimated completion date N/A

Current status of project design (% complete) N/A

6. Location affected by proposed action (county, range and township):
Lincoln County - T36 & 37N, R24 & 25W

7. Project size: estimate the numbers of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

(a) Developed:
residential..... 0 acres
industrial 0 acres

(b) Open Space/Woodlands/
Recreation 0 acres

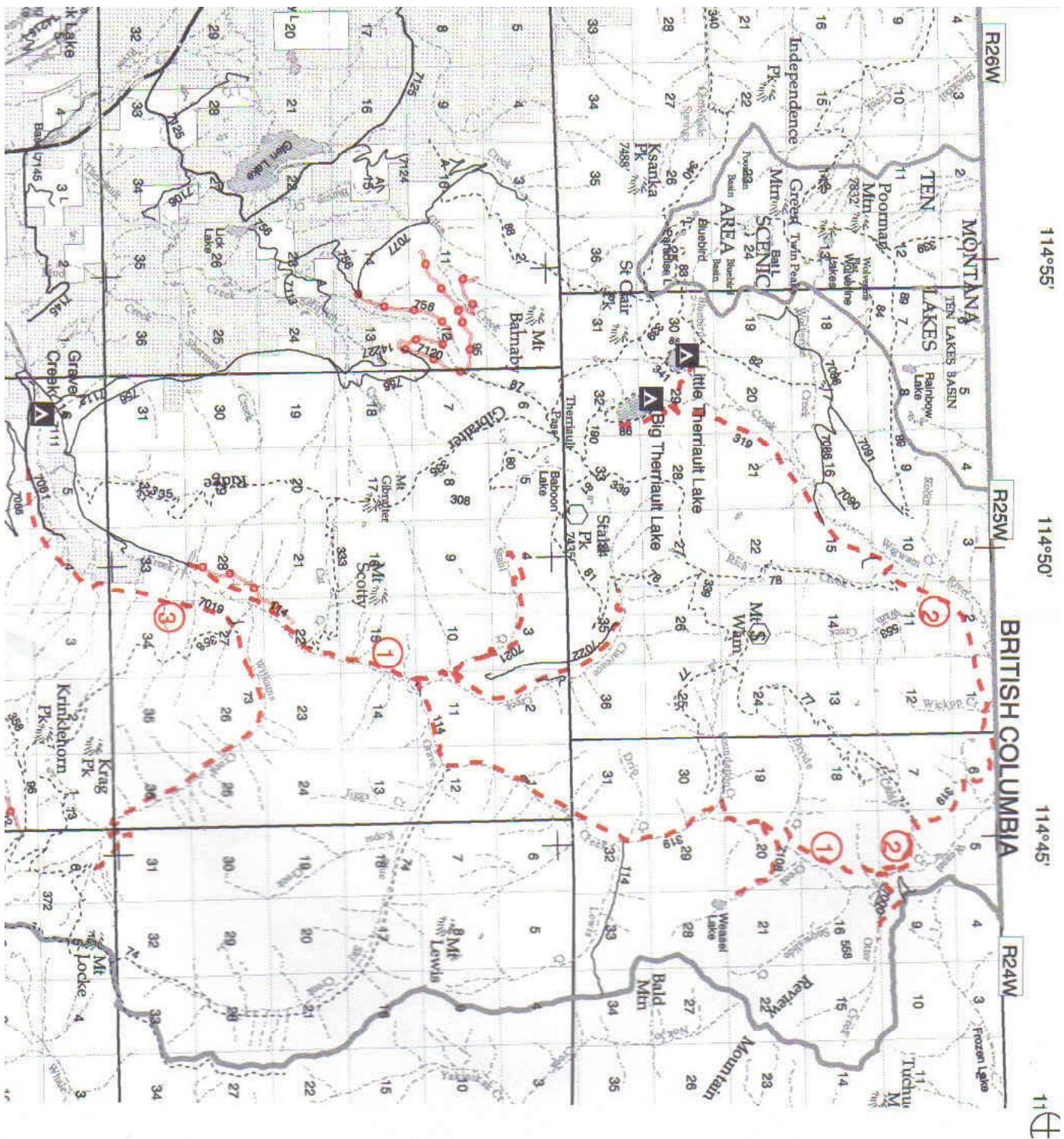
(c) Wetlands/Riparian
Areas 0 acres

(d) Floodplain 0 acres

(e) Productive:
irrigated cropland..... 0 acres
dry cropland 0 acres
forestry.....approximately 42 miles of road and trail
rangeland..... 0 acres
other 0 acres

8. Map/site plan: Attach an original 8½" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.

Map of current groomed trail system.



9. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action.

PURPOSE: The Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club proposes to groom the snow trails identified on the Kootenai Snow Trails map. These routes were set up in the 1960s with the help of the KNF. They are rated: No. 1 - groomed regularly, No. 2 - groomed occasionally, and No. 3 - ungroomed designated routes on the KNF Snow Trails map. Snow conditions set the pace for the grooming that is done. No. 1 routes are groomed weekly, No. 2 routes are done less frequently, and No. 3 routes remain ungroomed. Having the trails well marked and maintained is very important to the safety of our winter enthusiasts. We have had increased use of our trail system with many taking advantage of the access. Our proposal also includes education, safety, and addressing wildlife concerns.

BENEFITS: More enthusiasts are enjoying the fun, excitement, and wide-open spaces that they can access through groomed trails, thus providing not only individual enjoyment, but also increased revenue through local and tourist usage. With the increases in riders comes an increase in the gas tax available toward grooming. Out-of-state users must purchase a temporary registration, a portion of which comes back for grooming activities. Increased use brings with it a need to better educate the users regarding safety and wildlife concerns. Providing accurate maps make identifying trailheads and groomed routes easier, makes users aware of area closures, and gives information about local snowmobile clubs and other important contacts the user might need. Signage at trailheads and along the route can inform the rider of safety concerns and area closures, which may reduce trespass and injury. Snowmobilers add an economic boost to our winter tourism and should expect accurate information and groomed trails for their investment in the activity and their support of the community.

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the MEPA-required no action alternative). At a minimum, the following three alternatives must be presented:

Alternative A - No-action Alternative: No action. Financing from Montana FWP would no longer continue. Trail grooming would no longer take place. Roads in the area would most likely continue to be used by snowmobiles. Accidents could occur because safety to all users would suffer greatly. Tree removal across roads, mogul removal, road signage, trailhead maintenance, and safety signage would all stop. Education of users in critical habitat areas and wilderness areas may be limited. Unmaintained trailheads could possibly cause unsafe traffic conditions. Loss of user enjoyment of this type of recreation on the forest may occur. There would be possibility of an increase in search and rescue needs with no marked, groomed trails. The no-action alternative does not achieve the purpose and need identified for the proposed action.

Alternative B - Preferred Alternative: Retain existing trail system. Grooming would continue on existing routes listed on the trail map; financing from Montana FWP would continue. Safety to all trail users would continue. Education of users in critical wildlife habitat and proposed wilderness areas would be expanded in some locations. Maintained parking areas would continue to provide safer traffic conditions. Outdoor recreation opportunities provided by the groomed trails would continue and enhance users

enjoyment. This preferred alternative addresses the purpose and need for grooming snowmobile trails.

Alternative C - Add New Trails: Groom existing trails historically done and add new ones as permitted. This alternative requires additional resource information on new trails recommended for grooming. Without this information, T & E species may be adversely affected. Also, other wildlife and natural resources may be impacted. A new environmental assessment may be required to evaluate effects.

11. Listing of each local, state, or federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction:

(a) Permits		
Agency Name: USFS Kootenai National Forest	Permit: Challenge Cost Share Agreement	Date Filed: 12-12-2007

(b) Funding	
Agency Name: MFWP	Funding Amount: Approx. \$7,400 upon approval of EA

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities	
Agency Name: United States Forest Service - Kootenai National Forest	Type of Responsibility: Land Managing Agency for trail system

12. List of agencies consulted during preparation of this Environmental Checklist:
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
United States Forest Service - Kootenai National Forest
13. Name of Preparer(s) of this Environmental Checklist:
Twila Webb, Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club
14. Date submitted. November 15, 2008

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Land Resources” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on land resources. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects of the action as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?			X		NO	1e
f. Other						

1e: Potential snow slides are a minor danger on the groomed trails. Proper signage is an important part of the safety plan. There are also Avalanche classes available to the general public.

1a, b, c, d: This is maintenance on existing trails, so this project will not reduce stability, soil productivity, disturb geological features, or cause change in beds or banks of streams, rivers, or lakes.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Air” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on air resources. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects of the action as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

2. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (also see 13 (c))			X		No	2a
b. Creation of objectionable odors?			X		No	2b
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. Any discharge that will conflict with federal or state air quality regs?		X				
f. Other						

2a: As industry standards increase, noise and emissions levels will decrease. Snowmobile owners can reduce emissions by keeping their engines tuned, and use of synthetic oil is recommended to cut down on pollutants.

2b: All current model snowmobiles meet the current EPA standards for noise and emissions/odor. Technological advances with four stroke engines and improved two-stroke technology will further reduce both 2a and 2b.

2c, d, e: This application for grooming will not change climate, create adverse effect on vegetation, or cause discharge in conflict with federal or state regulations.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Water” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on water resources. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. Effects to a designated floodplain?		X				
m. Any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations?		X				
n. Other:						

3c-g & i: The grooming of trails should have no negative effects on surface or ground water quantity and quality. No negative effects on flooding or water rights. All water crossings are bridges.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Vegetation” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on vegetative resources. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

4. VEGETATION	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X				
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		Yes	4f
f. Effects to wetlands or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:						

4f: Please refer to Appendix A for the Weed Management Plan.

4a-d, f: Grooming will not alter existing plant communities nor adversely affect threatened or endangered species. It will not reduce production acreage or affect wetlands or farmlands.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Fish/Wildlife” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on fish and wildlife resources. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

5. FISH/WILDLIFE	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comme nt Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?			X		No	5f
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. Adverse effects to threatened/endangered species or their habitat?			X		No	5h
i. Introduction or exportation of any species not presently or historically occurring in the affected location?		X				
j. Other:						

5a-e, i: No critical effect on fish & wildlife habitat. No change in diversity or abundance of game animals, birds, or non-game species. No introduction of new species or creation of barriers to animal movement. No increase in conditions that stress wildlife or limit abundance. No introduction or exportation of any species.

(See Appendix B, Fisheries Review Form, pages 23-25)

5f, h: The proposed action is not likely to cause adverse affects for T & E species. (See Appendix C, Wildlife Review Form, pages 26-28)

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Noise/Electrical Effects” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects of noise and electrical activities. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X		Yes	6a
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?			X		No	6b
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:						

6a: As users increase, noise levels may increase; however, as the users spread out over the trail systems, noise levels will decrease at any specific site or area. With increases in technology, the noise concerns should diminish.

6b: Cross-country skiers or dog sledders using the system will be exposed to noise levels they consider a nuisance for a short time. Cross-country skiers, dog sledders, and other winter recreationists will be informed that they are on a groomed trail system identified for snowmobile use and should expect snowmobiles and noise as a condition of use.

6c, d: There are no homes in close proximity to the grooming operation; therefore, no electrostatic, electromagnetic, or radio/television interference will occur.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Land Use” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on land use. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects.

7. LAND USE	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. A conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. A conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on, or relocation of, residences?		X				
e. Compliance with existing land policies for land use, transportation, and open space?		X				
f. Increased traffic hazards, traffic volume, or speed limits or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X		Yes	7f
g. Other:						

7a-e: Grooming will not interfere with productivity of existing land. It does not conflict with natural areas of unusual scientific or educational importance. It will not adversely affect residence. Grooming is in compliance with existing land use policies and the purpose and need of this EA.

7f: Impact happens on the road accessing the groomed trail system. There is a limited parking area. Roads have posted speed limits.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Risk/Health Hazards” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects of risks and health hazards. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects of the action as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Effects on existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create need for a new plan?			X			8b
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. Disturbance to any sites with known or potential deposits of hazardous materials?		X				
e. The use of any chemical toxicants?			X		Yes	8e
f. Other:						

8a, c, d: Grooming poses no risk of explosion or release of hazardous substances and no apparent human health hazard. Grooming does not disturb any known deposit of hazardous materials.

8b: A positive effect will be created through the use of emergency plans developed by the snowmobile club and the local search and rescue organization.

8e: Weed sprays used to control noxious weeds will be specified and supervised by KNF licensed personnel.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Community Impact” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on the community. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?			X		No	9a
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?			X			9c
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other:						

9a: We could have increased use due to population and early trail closure in other areas. May have a slightly higher usage if trails are groomed; people with some physical restrictions are able to ride groomed trails and have an enjoyable experience, and thus may go more often.

9c: Grooming of trails brings winter recreation (snowmobiling) enthusiasts from beyond the local community. While these individuals are in the community, they bring winter tourism dollars (for fuel, food, motels, and other businesses) to our community during a time when local economy is generally slow.

9b, d, e: No other effects, alteration of the community social structure, or significant changes in industrial or commercial activity are anticipated as a result of our grooming these trails.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Public Services/Taxes/Utilities” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on public services, taxes and utilities. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. An effect upon, or result in a need for new or altered, governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If so, specify:			X			10a
b. Effects on the local or state tax base and revenues?			X			10b
c. A need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Increased used of any energy source?		X				
e. Other.						
Additional information requested:						
f. Define projected revenue sources.	N/A					
g. Define projected maintenance costs.	Upon approval of this EA we will receive \$7400.00					

10a: Search and rescue will have better routes to use for access to help find lost or injured winter recreationists. Snowmobilers would benefit from the signed trails and trail heads. This may help reduce possible search and rescue missions.

10b: Out-of-state riders are required to purchase a registration for their machines each year. This revenue goes to the state of Montana, a portion of which comes back to the county where the permit is purchased.

10c, d: Grooming will not require any substantial alteration of any utility. Grooming will not significantly impact any energy source.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Aesthetics/Recreation” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on aesthetics & recreation. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)			X		Yes	11c
d. Adverse effects to any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas?		X				
e. Other:						

11c: Having the trails groomed, signed, and in good shape may increase tourism. This would be hard to measure as these areas are currently used for recreation and tourism.

11a, b, d: Groomed trails lead to scenic vistas. They provide the user with a better view, and in no way obstruct or alter the aesthetic quality or character of any view, river, or wilderness area. Many of our groomed trails lead to destinations where the scenery is unique in winter and the experience rewarding. We do not groom wilderness study areas; the groomed trails only go to the boundaries.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Cultural/historical Resources” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on cultural/historical resources. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical changes that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				12c
d. Adverse effects to historic or cultural resources?		X				
e. Other:						

12a, b, d: No impact. There are no known cultural or historical resources on our groomed trail system; therefore, no effect on these resources.

12c: There are no known existing religious or sacred sites in the area. The Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation representatives were contacted. No response was received.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Summary Evaluation of Significance” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects. Even if you have checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:						
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)			X			13a
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. Have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy?		X				
Additional information requested:						
g. List any federal or state permits required.	NONE					

13a: Grooming these trails may over time slightly increase the use in areas for recreation in the winter. The recreation use occurring in the winter season on existing routes and trails does not create a significant cumulative effect on the environment or resources.

13b-f: Grooming trails identified by the KNF winter snowmobile trails map and travel plan will not involve potential risks, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous; does not potentially conflict with any local state, or federal law, regulation, standard, or formal plan; does not establish a precedent that significant environmental impacts will be proposed; does not generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created; and does not have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy.

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST CONCLUSION SECTION

1. Discuss the cumulative and secondary effects of this project as a whole. These are impacts to the human environment that, individually, may be minor for a specific project, but, when considered in combination to other actions, may result in significant impacts.

There are no anticipated cumulative effects of this project. A possible secondary effect is the increase of use of the area over time; however this increase may occur even if the trail system were left ungroomed. This effect would not be significant if it occurred.

2. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this Environmental Checklist (Part II), is an EIS required?

YES _____

NO X

If an EIS is not required, explain why the current checklist level of review is appropriate. An EA (October 1996) selected Alternative 4 for snowmobiling trail grooming by using funds generated from the percentage of the gas tax that goes towards snowmobile recreation. This EA assessed specific concerns in areas groomed by the Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club. The concerns included social and resource values that compromise the human environment. The MEPA/NEPA checklist addressed potential issues of the ongoing snowmobile grooming program. No new issues were identified that were not addressed in the 1996 EA or this 2008 checklist and accompanying documents. Therefore an EIS is not required.

3. **Public Comment:**

The public will be notified by way of one statewide news release, legal notices in the *Daily Interlake* (Kalispell), *Western News* (Libby), and the *Tobacco Valley News* (Eureka), and by public notice on the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks web site - <http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices>.

The draft EA will be out for public review from December 5, 2008, through January 5, 2009. Questions and comments should be directed to R-1 Park Management Specialist Amy Grout, 490 N Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901, or e-mailed to agrout@mt.gov. Comments must be received by January 5, 2009.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Affected Environment – The aspects of the human environment that may change as a result of an agency action.

Alternative – A different approach to achieve the same objective or result as the proposed action.

Categorical Exclusion – A level of environmental review for agency action that do not individually, collectively, or cumulatively cause significant impacts to the human environment, as determined by rulemaking or programmatic review, and for which an EA or EIS is not required.

Cumulative Impacts – Impacts to the human environment that, individually, may be minor for a specific project, but, when considered in relation to other actions, may result in significant impacts.

Direct Impacts – Primary impacts that have a direct cause and effect relationship with a specific action, i.e. they occur at the same time and place as the action that causes the impact.

Environmental Assessment (EA) – The appropriate level of environmental review for actions that either does not significantly affect the human environment or for which the agency is uncertain whether an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required.

Environmental Assessment Checklist – An EA checklist is a standard form of an EA, developed by an agency for actions that generally produce minimal impacts.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – A comprehensive evaluation of the impacts to the human environment that likely would result from an agency action or reasonable alternatives to that action. An EIS also serves a public disclosure of agency decision-making. Typically, an EIS is prepared in two steps. The Draft EIS is a preliminary detailed written statement that facilitates public review and comment. The Final EIS is a completed, written statement that includes a summary of major conclusions and supporting information from the Draft EIS, responses to substantive comments received on the Draft EIS, a list of all comments on the Draft EIS and any revisions made to the Draft EIS and an explanation of the agency's reasons for its decision.

Environmental Review – An evaluation, prepared in compliance with the provisions of MEPA and the MEPA Model Rules, of the impacts to the human environment that may result as a consequence of an agency action.

Human Environment – Those attributes, including but not limited to biological, physical, social, economic, cultural, and aesthetic factors that interrelate to form the environment.

Long-Term Impact – An impact, which lasts well beyond the period of the initial project.

Mitigated Environmental Assessment – The appropriate level of environmental review for actions that normally would require an EIS, except that the state agency can impose designs, enforceable controls, or stipulations to reduce the otherwise significant impacts to below the level of significance. A mitigated EA must demonstrate that: (1) all impacts have been identified; (2) all impacts can be mitigated below the level of significance; and (3) no significant impact is likely to occur.

Mitigation – An enforceable measure(s), designed to reduce or prevent undesirable effects or impacts of the proposed action.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – The federal counterpart of MEPA that applies only to federal actions.

No Action Alternative – An alternative, required by the MEPA Model Rules for purposes of analysis, that describes the agency action that would result in the least change to the human environment.

Public Participation – The process by which an agency includes interested and affected individuals, organizations, and agencies in decision making.

Record of Decision – Concise public notice that announces the agency's decision, explains the reason for that decision, and describes any special conditions related to implementation of the decision.

Scoping – The process, including public participation, that an agency uses to define the scope of the environmental review.

Secondary Impacts – Impacts to the human environment that are indirectly related to the agency action, i.e. they are induced by a direct impact and occur at a later time or distance from the triggering action.

Short-Term Impact – An impact directly associated with a project that is of relatively short duration.

Significance – The process of determining whether the impacts of a proposed action are serious enough to warrant the preparation of an EIS. An impact may be adverse, beneficial or both. If none of the adverse impacts are significant, an EIS is not required.

Supplemental Review – A modification of a previous environmental review document (EA or EIS) based on changes in the proposed action, the discovery of new information, or the need for additional evaluation.

Tiering – Preparing an environmental review by focusing specifically on narrow scope of issues because the broader scope of issues was adequately addressed in previous environmental review document(s) that may be incorporated by reference.

Appendix A: Weed Management Plan

TEN LAKES SNOWMOBILE CLUB

WEED MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Our Weed management program has three steps:

Step 1: The groomer does not have a permanent facility therefore we have to move it in and out each year to a storage area. To prevent transferring weeds from different areas the machine is cleaned thoroughly before and after being transported. Any equipment contracted for transportation is also cleaned.

Step 2: With approval we do weed management around the facility area with minimal spraying.

Step 3: Our newsletter has posted notices to all of our members reminding them to be responsible by cleaning their personal machines and equipment to prevent noxious weeds from being spread.

Appendix B: Fisheries Review Form, 2008 Season

**Outdoor Recreation Grants
Fisheries Review Form**

Project Sponsor Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club 2008 Season

Sponsor Contact Twila Webb 406-297-3377
Name Telephone No.

Project Category (Check appropriate space)

☐ New Trails Construction: new trail, trail-head, trail-side facilities

☐ Trail Renovation: renovation, expansion, relocation, and redesign of existing facilities

☒ Trail Maintenance

☐ Other

Required Materials

☐ Map of project location (USGS 1:24,000 at a minimum)

☒ Complete description of project

Applicant fills out information above this line

Fisheries biologist fills out information below this line

1. Are there any fisheries or fisheries habitat concerns? *There are bull trout in Grave Creek. No concerns associated with grooming activities.*
2. Describe any potential effects on:
 - a. Fish species *Nine*

- b. Federally listed threatened, endangered, sensitive species: are there any in the area? Will this project affect any? How? Will this project, as proposed, require a biological assessment as part of consultation with the USFWS on TES species?

Bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. No effect. No BA/BE required for consultation on a no effect determination.

- c. Riparian areas

No effect.

- d. Water quality

No effect.

- e. Potential sedimentation or any other issues

None.

- f. Other

3. Mitigating measures: Examples could include alternate routes, signs, design changes to crossings, etc. If there are no mitigating measures and project is not acceptable, reject the proposal! Supply additional pages if necessary.

No mitigation necessary

4. Will this project require 124, 310 or 404 permits and, if so, have they been completed?

No permits needed.

4. Additional comments.

Fisheries Biologist Signature Page

I don't recommend this project as proposed.

Signature:

Agency, title, phone number:

Date (month, day, year):

I recommend this project with the following stipulations: *No stipulations*

Signature: *Pat*

Agency, title, phone number: *USFS North End Fish Biologist 296-7163*
882-8333

Date (month, day, year): *April 29, 2008*

I did not have enough time to adequately review this proposal and subsequently do not want to give authorization.

Signature:

Agency, title, phone number:

Date (month, day, year):

Suggested reference for recreation effects on wildlife:

Joslin, G., and H. Youmans, coordinators. 1999. Effects of Recreation on Rocky Mountain Wildlife: A Review for Montana. Committee on Effects of Recreation on Wildlife, Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society.
307 pp.

Montana Fisheries Information System Database:

<http://maps2.nris.state.mt.us/scripts/esrimap.dll?name=MFISH&Cmd=INST>

Appendix C: Wildlife Review Form, 2008 Season

**Outdoor Recreation Grants
Wildlife Review Form**

Project Sponsor Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club 2008 Season

Sponsor Contact Twila Webb 406-297-3377
Name Telephone No.

Project Category (Check appropriate box)

New Trails Construction: new trail, trail-head, trail-side facilities

Trail Renovation: renovation, expansion, relocation, redesign of existing facilities

☒ Trail Maintenance

Other

Required Materials

Detailed maps of project location (USGS 1:24,000 scale quad map at a minimum)

☒ Complete description of project

Applicant fills out information above this line

Wildlife biologist fills out information below this line

1. Are there any wildlife concerns? Explain. *I am not concerned about the trail grooming itself. The grooming facilitates increased use of the upper basins, which may affect denning by female wolverine in late winter*
2. Will there be any possible effects on:
 - a. Critical seasonal wildlife habitats. *See above.*
 - b. Fawning or calving areas. *No*

c. Breeding, roosting, nesting, perching or hunting areas. No

d. Riparian habitat. No

e. Federally listed threatened, endangered, sensitive species: are there any in the area? May this project affect any? How? Will this project, as proposed, require a biological assessment as part of consultation with the USFWS on TES species?

This area contains a variety of threatened, endangered and sensitive species ranging from bull trout to grizzly bears. It is my opinion that grooming will not impact any of these species. I am not sure what would be necessary to trigger a Biological Assessment.

f. Other

3. Mitigating measures: Examples could include signing, alternate routes, use restrictions, timing, etc. If there are no mitigating measures and project is not acceptable as proposed, reject the proposal! Supply additional page if necessary.

Knowledge on the impact of snowmobiles on denning wolverines is limited. Also, it is unclear whether this associated impact should be considered when examining this proposal for trail grooming.

4. Additional comments.

Wildlife Biologist Signature Page

I don't recommend this project as proposed.

Signature:

Agency, title, phone number:

Date (month, day, year):

I recommend this project with the following stipulations:

Signature:

Timothy J. Thier
(Tim Thier)

Agency, title, phone number: Montana FWP; Area Wildlife Biologist; 882-4697

Date (month, day, year): May 5, 2008

I did not have enough time to adequately review this proposal and subsequently do not want to give authorization.

Signature:

Agency, title, phone number:

Date (month, day, year):

Suggested reference for recreation effects on wildlife:

Joslin, G., and H. Youmans, coordinators. 1999. Effects of Recreation on Rocky Mountain Wildlife: A Review for Montana. Committee on Effects of Recreation on Wildlife, Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society.
307 pp.

Appendix D

TOURISM REPORT MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) & MCA 23-1-110

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by MCA 23-1-110 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Carol Crockett, Visitor Services Manager
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce
301 S. Park Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Project Name: Trail Grooming of Previously Approved Trails on the Kootenai National Forest

Project Description: The Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club wishes to continue grooming the 42 miles of snowmobile trails in the Graves Creek area of the Kootenai National Forest (KNF). These trails are identified and approved in the KNF travel plan. The trails do draw snowmobilers from the Eureka area, Flathead Valley and some state and out-of-state residents. These routes were initially set-up in the 1960s and have been used by snowmobilers ever since.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?
NO YES If YES, briefly describe:

As described, the project has the potential to positively impact the tourism & recreation industry economy.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?
NO YES If YES, briefly describe:

As described, the project would improve the quality and quantity of tourism & recreational opportunities.

Signature Carol Crockett Date 12/2/08